

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Listings of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A thin film magnetic head comprising a lower core layer, a bottom pole layer formed on the lower core layer separately therefrom or integrally therewith, a nonmagnetic gap layer formed on at least the bottom pole layer, an upper core layer to be joined to the top of the gap layer at a surface facing a recording medium, and a coil layer formed behind the bottom pole layer in the height direction, for inducing a recording magnetic field in the lower core layer and the upper core layer;

wherein the upper core layer comprises a tip region exposed with a track width at the surface facing the recording medium, and a rear end region extending backward from the end edge of the tip region in the height direction so that the width dimension in the track width direction gradually increases in the height direction; and

wherein the space between the tip region of the upper core layer and the bottom pole layer comprises a portion extending backward from the surface facing the recording medium in the height direction, in which only a gap layer is present, and a gap depth is regulated by the end edge of the portion, and a portion extending backward from the end edge in the height direction, in which an insulating layer is present together with the gap layer or with the gap layer removed so that the gap between the tip region and the bottom pole layer in the portion comprising the insulating layer is larger than the gap in the portion comprising only the gap layer[.] and

wherein the rear end surface of the bottom pole layer is inclined or curved so that the thickness of the bottom pole layer gradually decreases in the backward height direction, and the gap depth is regulated by the distance

between the top of the rear end surface and the surface facing the recording medium; and wherein a first insulating layer is formed to extend from the top of the rear end surface of the bottom pole layer to the lower core layer, a planarized surface is formed at the top of the first insulating layer to be continued from the top of the bottom pole layer, and the tip region of the upper core layer is formed to extend from the gap layer formed on the bottom pole layer to the gap layer formed on the planarized surface or to the planarized surface.

2. (Cancelled)
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Cancelled)
5. (Cancelled)
6. (Cancelled)
7. (Cancelled)
8. (Cancelled)
9. (Cancelled)
10. (Cancelled)
11. (Cancelled)
12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) A thin film magnetic head according to Claim 1 [12], wherein the first insulating layer has a coil forming surface which is formed behind the planarized surface in the height direction and lower than the planarized surface, the coil layer being formed on the coil forming surface through the gap layer or directly.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Cancelled)

26. (Cancelled)